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EUROPEANIZATION – FASHIONABLE NOTION OR INSPIRING CONCEPTUAL FRAMES?

Abstract: Europeanization is not a new term, but only throughout the recent two decades it has turned into a notion very frequently used in social science. It seems there are two reasons for its success: (1) the intensification of European integration in the late 1980's and (2) the development of the conceptual studies on Europeanization. Numerous theoretical approaches elaborated under the term have stimulated its popularity, yet they have also raised a critical question on the empirical usefulness of the broadly and vaguely defined concept. In the article the concept of Europeanization is taken under scrutiny. Recently developed multiple attitudes to Europeanization are critically discussed and presented with reference to the broader body of the literature on European integration. The considerations end with a short revision of possible empirical usages of the popular term in Polish context. This aim has been triggered by a shortage of references to the widely discussed concept in Polish literature. Polish debate on repercussions of the membership in the European Union may be significantly enriched by a thoughtful reference to the popular, even though controversial concept. Being aware of its shortcomings we can make a better use of its advantages.

Key words: Europeanization, theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, Poland

1. CONCEPTUALISATION OF THE TERM

Throughout the last two decades a notion of Europeanization has made a great career, turning into one of the leading concepts of the European studies (Bache, 2008: 9). The debate, undertaken by the students of political science in the mid 1990's, resulted in the wide range of publications devoted to Europeanization or using it as one of the explanatory tools (Lodge, 2006: 59, Quaglia et al., 2007, por. Hamedinger, Wolffhardt, 2010). In the run of those studies a variety of approaches has developed, some of them being very close to political geography. Yet, the flexibility of the concept has met a critical argument on the counterproductive expansion of the term. In this and the following section I endeavour to present the evolution of the popular concept from a critical angle.

The first important effort to conceptualize the term was undertaken by Ladrech (1994). In his view Europeanization is “an incremental process reorienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics become part of the organizational logic of national politics and policy-making” (Ladrech, 1994: 69). It is worth noting that Ladrech accepts two possible directions of the adaptational pressure: top-down one (i.e. influence of the European Union¹ – EU on the Member States – MS) and bottom-up (i.e. influence of the MS on the EU structures and policies). As such, his definition stimulated the further multidirectional development of the concept and of its usage for the empirical studies.

The popularity of the term is not always seen as a positive feature (Olsen, 2002, after: Quaglia et al., 2007). Critics notice an artificial expansion of the concept, which is being used as a fashionable label, more and more blurred in the variety of meanings (see e.g. Lodge’s critical article 2006). The reproaches put into question the purpose and utility of the concept, and by doing so they are comparable to those formulated against other popular terms, like globalization (Soja 2000: 190) and governance (Jessop, 2002; Kooimann, 2008). One can ask if the popularity of those concepts is also comparable. In case of Europeanization definition problems (Quaglia et al., 2007: 406) have been strengthened by the fact, that the term – developed in political science – was adopted and modified by sociologists, economics and anthropologists (partly this mechanism can be also referred to the other two mentioned concepts). At present Europeanization covers a wide range of meanings and approaches (see e.g. Lodge 2006, Bache 2008), which can be gathered in four main focal points (after: Hamedinger, Wolffhardt 2010: 10 ff).

- 1) Institutional adaptation of the MS in the process of integration with the EU, especially adaptation of the actors’ behaviour and interests under the changing national system of negotiations.
- 2) Questions on identity and belonging, drawing attention to the historical dimension of Europeanization.
- 3) Diffusion of the norms and values (e.g. human rights, democratic system) across the states.
- 4) Adaptation of the national policies and politics to the EU requirements.

This list should be extended by adding an approach which assumes a reverse (in comparison to the points 1 and 4) direction of the influence, that is: (5) influence of the MS on the EU regulations and politics as well as on the European norms and values.

Each of those paths is linked to a different scope of knowledge or different stage in the development of the research on Europeanization. The first

¹ Academic concepts developed throughout the last 30 years treat the process of European integration as an evolving phenomenon, therefore in this article – when referring to those concepts – the name of the organization (European Union) is used eliding from the date of its introduction by the Maastricht Treaty.

and the fourth one cover the most common subjects of political science. At first the attention of scholars was drawn exclusively by the national level, then it has expanded on the subnational actors and sectoral analysis. Seeking the common features of those perspectives, one may state that the basic understanding of the term Europeanization in political science refers to “the influence of the European integration processes on the MS” (Hamedinger, Wolffhardt, 2010: 10). Yet, this understanding is neither the only nor the unambiguous one. In its evolution, the concept incorporated also other meanings (see section 2), one of which is the approach listed as the fifth, referring to the influence of the MS on the EU.

The second and the third thematic group are closer to the anthropological and sociological orientation. An important feature of the two perspectives is that they do not limit the notion to the UE structures. This was a strong reproach against the meaning applied in political science, limited usually to the processes happening within the European Community and then European Union. There was even a proposal to make the concept more precise by changing its name to the *EU-ization*. It did not enter the scientific vocabulary, because of its rather awkward form, yet the core of the suggestion remains valid – it is difficult to contest a need for a semantic distinction between the processes connected to the EU and to the continent. If not reflected in the name itself, it should at least be made in the consciousness by being aware of the misleading generalizations which often accompany the popular notions. One may argue that the problem, vivid before 2004, has lost its meaning after the EU extension on the Central-Eastern Europe (EU covers now Europe in a much higher percentage). However, another problem remains: Europeanization in political science hardly refers to the external functioning of the EU and its impact on other continents. This weakness seems to remain rarely notices in the critical literature on Europeanization (in oppose to the analogical critic on the multi-level governance concept, see: George, 2004; Knodt, 2005).

Confrontation with the terminological doubts is much more positive in case of the anthropological approach, which considers also changes in culture, norms and values of non-European societies induced by the European influence. In this perspective Europeanization becomes analogical to orientalization or Americanization.

2. CHANGING CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO EUROPEANIZATION

2.1. Europeanization as a top-down process

Beginnings of the Europeanization debate were connected to the top-down understanding of the process (Bache, 2008: 10). Studies looked at the impact of the EU on the MS, concentrating on the changes in domestic structures,

procedures and politics triggered by the EU². This attitude came from the assumption that there was a general EU-pattern, to which all the MS should adjust. Incorporation of the EU provisions and politics into the national systems was called *downloading*. The convergence of the patterns, which results of this process can have two forms (Lodge, 2006). (1) It can refer to the legal changes in a member state, caused by the EU regulations, or (2) to the softer changes in a domestic system triggered by the EU regulations incidentally. The first reasoning was dominated by the assumption of the primacy of the EU law over the national one, the second one stressed the domestic change seen as a side-effect of functioning in the EU. What those two narrow understandings have in common is that they rest upon the transformations caused (directly or indirectly) by the EU legal provisions. This argumentation can be extended so as to cover also the changes triggered by softer means, like norms and values supported by the EU (see: Lodge, 2006: 63).

First studies of the top-down Europeanization had been focused on the state-level, only later attention was extended on the subnational units. To a large extent this was caused by the emancipation of the regions, which proceeded in the 1980's (see section 4.2.). Increasing influence of the regions, cities and localities on the EU politics and policies has drawn attention to the changes caused by the EU membership in that units.

An important factor in the process of adjusting to the EU provisions is the *goodness of fit*, i.e. the level of the initial coherence between the domestic and the EU structures (Börzel, Risse, 2003). Goodness of fit refers above all to the institutional determinism (adjustment of the national institutional setting to the EU regulations), but also (as pointed out by Börzel, 2001) to the institutional culture. Investigating into those factors, Börzel (2001) detected the differences in the pace and easiness of the adaptation to the EU structures among the states with the various styles of regional policy-making (it refers to the relations among the regions as well as to those between regions and a central level). The states characterized by the *conciliatory regionalism* (like Germany or Austria) found it easier to adopt to the EU structures and policies, and their regions developed the channels to influence the EU-level more quickly than the regions in the countries, with a more *competitive regionalism* (like Spain, Italy and Belgium).

Undertaking this line of research implied the broadening of attention of the Europeanization students. They ceased to focus exclusively on the convergence thesis (according to which all MS become more and more similar to a EU-wide pattern), and begun to look at the differentiating Europeanization patterns between the countries. As Green Cowles et al. (2001) state, the adaptation to the EU requirements and standards proceeds differently in

² This orientation of the studies on Europeanization is accused of focusing too much on institutional changes, paying little attention to the political behaviour and partisan analysis (Bache 2008: 15).

different MS and its results obtain different, nationally-determined colours. Already Ladrech (1994) pointed out, that due to the profound variation among European countries, fears of a total convergence are groundless (comp.: Bache, 2008: 10). Similar conclusions were reached by Bulmer and Burch (1998 after: Bache, 2008) who investigated the United Kingdom. The changes caused by the EU membership were undeniable, yet they all seemed to go along the traditional British procedures and governance modes. In the development of this research path scholars have noticed that due to the various local and regional conditions different responses to the EU pressure may appear also within one national context (see section 5).

Considering the domestic change triggered by the EU politics and policies we encounter different types of adaptation, distinguished usually after the degree of change (Tables 1 and 2). In the typologies both the strength of the EU requirements (e.g. their legal status) and the degree of the initial adjustment of a country (goodness of fit) are analyzed. The authors of the first proposal (Table 1.) consider only the situations where any domestic change takes place, whereas Radaelli (2003) elaborates a classification of all possible reactions to the EU pressure, including also passive and active resistance.

Table 1. Types of domestic change caused by the EU membership

Category	Features of the process	Degree of domestic change
Transformation	States fundamentally change existing policies, practices and/or preferences or replace them with the new ones.	High
Accommodation	States adapt existing policies, practices and/or preferences to the EU provisions without changing their essential features.	Modest
Absorption	States incorporate policies, practices and/or preferences of the EU without substantially modifying existing ones.	Low

Source: Börzel, Risse (2003: 69-70).

Table 2. Possible reactions to the EU adaptational pressure

Type	Characteristics of the process
Inertia	Lack of change
Absorption	Shallow adaptation change, corresponding to accommodation and absorption by Börzel and Risse (2003)
Transformation	Deep adaptation change, corresponding to transformation by Börzel and Risse (2003)
Retrenchment	Active contradiction against imposed requirements

Own elaboration based on Radaelli (2003).

The type of domestic change depends on the set of variables connected to the national context. The scheme of Risse et al. (2001) modified by Bache (2008) (Fig. 1) is constructed out of three stages. First, the authors identify the EU legal and preference-related pressure on the national context. Second, they assess the national conditions for adaptation, leaning on the assumption that the bigger the misfit (between national and EU regulations) the higher the adaptational pressure. Third, the detailed determinants on a national level are considered.

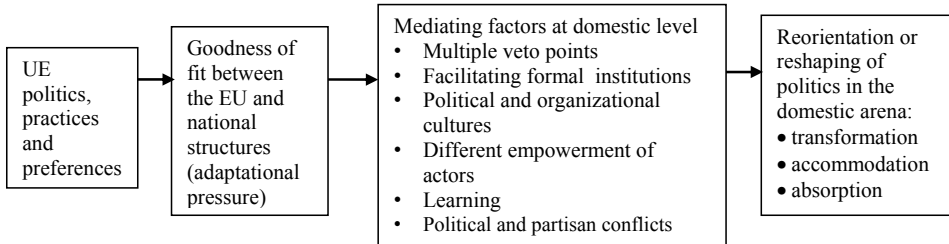


Fig. 1. Europeanization as a top-down process
Source: Risse et al. (2001) in adaptation of Bache (2008: 17).

At this stage it is worth to present the result of the empirical studies discussed by Lodge, (2006: 62). He claims that the full transformation happens very rarely. MS choose rather the strategies which allow them to adjust to the EU requirements with a minimal domestic change. If the adaptational pressure is stronger (e.g. due to its legal-institutional dimension) we may witness re-engineering of a domestic system, with a prevention of national political traditions. Those observations seem to put into question the real importance of downloading in reality.

2.2. Europeanization as a bottom-up process

With the increasing popularity of the Europeanization concept, the top-down perspective was put into question as incomplete. Already Ladrech (1994) saw a need for a bottom-up analysis of the phenomenon, especially with regard to the differentiated influence of the MS on the EU structures. Along this argument also other authors considered the determinants of the success of some states in influencing the EU level. Among the explanations of the different power and bargaining position of the MS one mentions not only the size and political power of the state, but also the perception of problems and ability to persuade others of a concrete way of solving it (Lodge, 2006: 65). Lodge (ibidem) presents some interesting examples of adaptations of the national practices and strategies by the EU as well as the situations when a country accepted the strategy of other state as a consequence of adopting it by the whole EU.

These phenomena can be linked to the process of defining the problems (so called *framing*) in the EU, which – as Schumann (1993) stresses – poses a crucial, but also a very difficult basis for the further policy-making. Framing draws attention to the importance of choosing which issues are to be treated as problems to be solved. The bigger and more differentiated the group is, the more difficult it is to reach the agreement. Decision on a problematic nature of an issue determines its public perception (it shapes the social opinion) and all the subsequent actions undertaken to deal with it. It explains the increase in the role of the actors, who are able to participate in framing. In the EU context framing is especially difficult as it concerns a big group of states, having different particular problems, priorities and even the way of looking at similar issues (see: Daviter, 2007).

The process of influencing the EU by its MS is called *uploading*, which pays attention to passing the preferences and practices from a state to the EU level. Yet, the term is criticized by Lodge (2006) for its over-simplistic treatment of the phenomenon. The motives and tools used to force ones national point of view onto the whole EU are too differentiated to compare the process with the one taking place in informatics. Lodge raises a similar argument with regard to the downloading metaphor.

Bottom-up Europeanization comprises two approaches. The first concentrates on the state activities aimed at strengthening its international position, which would enable influencing the EU (uploading). The second refers to the concept of framing and tries to understand who, at which stage and how sets the EU political agenda. Especially interesting is the question on the mode of uploading the national preferences to the European Commission and on their usage by the Commission³.

2.3. Europeanization as a complex (multidirectional) process

It is easy to notice, that in practice both top-down and bottom-up processes occur in parallel. On the one hand the EU provisions are being passed into and adopted by the MS, on the other national politicians and officers participate in shaping the EU politics, policies and standards. The combination of those two perspectives gave birth to the new, more complex understanding of Europeanization (Bache, 2008: 11). The scheme elaborated by Bache (2008; Fig. 2) considers two directions of the influence on the line EU – MS, as well as the national processes, independent of the EU ones, which also influence the domestic system. In this way Bache tries to eliminate an often made negligence in European studies, which explain domestic

³ Framing in the UE stresses the importance of the European Commission (EC) as the only institution with a right to legislative initiative. The EC decides upon a set of problematic issues, on which the Council and the Parliament work.

changes exclusively by the EU influence, forgetting about the independent national determinants.

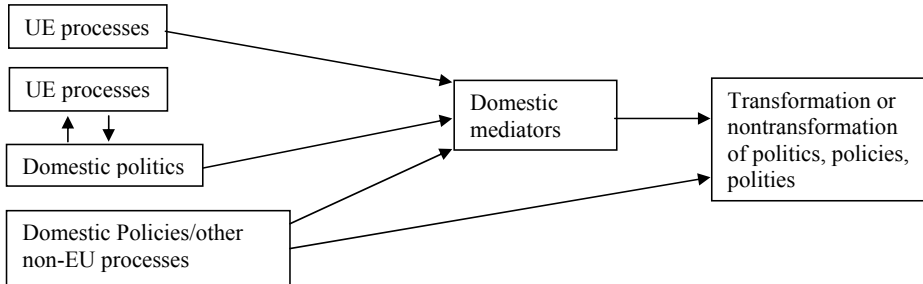


Fig. 2. Europeanization as a complex process
Source: Bache (2008: 19).

Adaptational pressure depends on the type of a specific EU regulation and on the procedures in a specific policy (Bache, 2008). When governance takes place through negotiations, uploading is easier and will probably prevail. If governance reveals elements of hierarchy or facilitated coordination, downloading is more probable. Moreover, in the first case strong pressure to download stems from a EU legal provision, whereas in the second case downloading, if occurs, comes rather from a learning process and is more internalized.

One of the governance tools of the EU, which combines both perspectives (top-down and bottom-up) is an *open method of coordination* (OMC, Benz 2008: 47-52, Lodge, 2006: 68), especially popularized after the Lisbon Strategy. It is seen as a new mode of governance (Benz, 2008), practiced especially in the policy fields where the MS preserved their competence and the EU influence has to be exerted by the soft means (ibidem: 47). The OMC assumes that the MS voluntarily copy best practices from other countries, and by these means domestic change occurs. The method comprises the cooperation between the entities (e.g. exchange of experience) and the mobilization (through scoreboards, benchmarking and comparing the results). Top-down character of the method is reflected by publicizing success and failure stories to induce a preferred behavior. Bottom-up elements are realized by limiting the role of the European Commission in setting the standards and shifting this task onto the MS. Coordination should result from the horizontal debate of the territorial units and non-public actors, which stimulates learning and application of the best solutions. The OMC relies on the bottom-up mechanisms of constructing the set of best practices, evaluation and resemblance (Lodge, 2006: 69)⁴.

⁴ Yet, it should be mention that Lodge (2006:69) is skeptical about the successful usage of the OMC. In his view it seldom brings the expected results – voluntary resemblance is rare, what results in very limited possibilities of influencing MS by the means of the OMC.

As Lodge (2006: 67-68) argues, in many interactions within the EU both directions of pressure appear. In numerous cases specific constellation of power and influence escapes the logic of simple top-down or bottom-up process.

Table 3. The two generations of Europeanization research

First generation	Second generation
Top-down perspective, seeking to explain domestic reactions to pressures from above	Emphasizes both top-down and bottom-up, vertical and horizontal dimensions
Assumes a „mismatch” between European and domestic levels – particularly legal, institutional and procedural	Greater emphasis on interests, beliefs, values and ideas: the „political” dynamics of fit
Emphasizes the reactive and involuntary nature of adaptation	Greater emphasis on voluntary adaptation through policy transfer and learning
Focuses on policies and polity dimensions	Greater emphasis on politics, e.g. identities, electoral behaviour, parties and party system
Expects increasing cross-national convergence	Emphasizes different impact of Europe
Defines Europeanization in substantive terms – focus on the „end state” effects	Emphasizes the impact of Europeanization on domestic political, institutional and policy dynamics

Source: Bache (2003: 6, after: Hamedinger, Wolffhardt 2010:12)

The three main approaches to Europeanization are complemented by Quaglia et al. (2007) by a horizontal perspective⁵, which focuses on the cultural, social and political changes spreading between the states. In doing so, the perspective gets close to the sociological and anthropological understanding of Europeanization. It differs from the top-down approach by considering also those changes which spread from one state to another without an EU intermediation (comp. a scheme of Bache 2008, Fig. 2).

3. CRITICAL VIEWS ON EUROPEANIZATION CONCEPT

All the understandings of Europeanization meet some critical remarks. Main lines of the contestation can be summarized in three points (see also: Quaglia et al., 2007: 410).

⁵ Quaglia et al. (2007) distinguished also a fifth approach, which they defined as synonym of institution-building and policy-making at the EU level. Yet the category seems to overlap with the three main types of Europeanization defined after a dominant direction of relations. In both top-down and bottom-up approach institution-building can be investigated as one of the influenced dimensions. By separating this field the authors aimed at underlining the institutional aspect of European integration (*ibidem*: 408), which (as we remember) prevails in the Europeanization studies (Bache 2008), but they note a controversial aspect of such a move.

First critical point rests upon the multiplicity of Europeanization research, complaining about the lack of cohesion and consequence in the studies (Lodge, 2006). Lodge (2006) criticizes a large number of theoretical perspectives developed and left without sufficient empirical evidence. Resulting theoretical richness leads only to the increase of chaos and to the unconstructive extension of the concept. Defending the multiple theoretical research on Europeanization Mair (2004 after: Quaglia et al. 2007) reminds the stimulating eclectic character of all the studies on European integration (see also: Rosamond 2000).

The second critical argument points out the danger coming from too frequent a usage of the concept. Some scholars tend to treat Europeanization as an explanatory mechanism for all the domestic changes which cannot be explained when staying in the national context (in this respect Europeanization appears similar to globalization). Critics accuse the researchers of neglecting other potential influencing factors, what may lead to the overestimation of the strength of Europeanization. One of the processes often neglected in the Europeanization studies is the international diffusion of norms, values etc., which occurs without the mediation of the EU (comp. horizontal perspective by Quaglia et al. 2007). Similarly, top-down Europeanization was accused of not considering national processes which could also serve as an explanation of the changes in the national context. Moreover, Lodge (2006) stresses the tendency to refer to Europeanization even when the empirical evidence cannot confirm its existence. He argues for instance that the far reaching domestic transformation hardly appears in practice, as the states usually prefer adaptation with least possible degree of change in national structures. In his view, leaning on Europeanization concept should be more careful.

Yet the claimed shortage of the empirical evidence on the changes triggered by the EU in its MS, finds its counterargument in the elaboration of Bache (2008), who presents numerous examples of such an influence within the EU regional policy. A short overview of the empirical research in various policies describe Quaglia et al. (2007: 414-416).

The third critical argument draws attention to the limited explanatory power of Europeanization. Ex definitione the multiplicity of studies leaning on this concept have to stay in the European context, which fosters its abuse or superficial use. The same point is made towards other theories referring to the European integration, as its exceptional character severely restricts the fields of application (see: Rosamond 2000 – the “N=1 problem”).

To defend Europeanization one has to state though, that its wide-ranging character contributed to the opening of the research on European integration on many disciplines and provided a stimulating conceptual frames for studies of intensifying integration.

4. PUTTING EUROPEANIZATION INTO A WIDER THEORETICAL CONTEXT

4.1. Europeanization among other concepts on European integration

The concept of Europeanization offers yet another perspective to a long tradition of research on phenomenon of European integration. The development of the common European identity, and somehow also continental integration, reaches deep to the X-XI century and spreads through the ages until today (see e.g. Kłoczowski, 2010). The focus of this article remains much narrower, and is limited to the very recent history of the last six decades of intense institutionalization of the European integration.

The political endeavours of integration and building the common European structures undertaken after the II World War were accompanied by two academic approaches, trying to explain the reasons for the increasing continental cooperation. *Intergovernmentalism* stresses the dominance of the states in the integration process. It assumes that the national governments, playing the role of gatekeepers, are capable of full control over the integration and may prevent its unwanted consequences (Bache, Flinders, 2004: 2). European integration can proceed only as a result of the consciously shaped national politics. In contrast, *functionalism* claims that the European system follows towards an increased integration in chosen policy fields and the states have only very limited power to stop this process, though they can dictate its pace (Heywood, 2009: 186). The later form of functionalism – *neofunctionalism* assumes that the regional (here: European) integration in one field triggers further integration. This positive dynamic of integration is called a *spill-over effect* (Heywood 2009: 186) and refers both to the strengthening of integration within one policy as well as to the extension of the integration into other fields. In the contrary to the intergovernmentalists, neofunctionalists claim that the MS are increasingly involved in the integration and the resulting interdependences, so that their possibilities to control the process are significantly decreasing. Development of this approach posed a response to the strengthening of the European cooperation in the late 1980's.

The further intensification of institutional interdependencies within the EU (Single European Act 1986, reform of the Structural Funds in 1988, launching the European Monetary Union 1999, Maastricht Treaty 1992 and the subsequent EU extensions) caused further development of the EU-research (see: Bache, Flinders, 2004; Tömmel, 2008; Bache, 2008). Intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism found themselves quite helpless in explaining the reasons for the increasing integration within the EU. This provoked a substantial change in thinking about the EU – it has started to be treated as a political system *sui generis* (e.g. Kohler-Koch 1999), that is the specific one, which should neither be compared to the national state nor be investigated

by the means used in analyzing state systems. The focus of attention has been shifted from explaining the reasons for integration to the analysis of the EU as a complex and unique political system, in which new modes of governance appear (see e.g. Tömmel 2008). A notion of *multi-level governance* (MLG) was invented especially for the EU and soon conceptualized in a separate broad approach (Hooghe, Marks 2001; Benz 2004, 2008; Bache 2008). It describes the EU as a complex and dynamic system of various autonomous yet interdependent actors (both public and non-public), who operate at different levels (EU, state, subnational ones; see e.g. Hamedinger, Wolffhardt, 2010: 11). The power in the system is dispersed, so that no single institution is able to make important decisions on its own (so called *decisive polycentrism*). Therefore, agreement always depends on the constant negotiations between all the actors. Investigating into the mechanisms of functioning of the EU, especially into the power and competence division among the actors, MLG gets close to the Europeanization (see: *ibidem*). Moreover, the aim of research in both perspective is similar, and different from the one of intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism. MLG and Europeanization try to understand the patterns of cooperation within the EU, whereas the two older approaches focus on the reasons for integration.

Interestingly, some researchers found MLG disappointing. Hamedinger and Wolffhardt (2010) point out, that it does not explain in a satisfactory way the mechanisms of mobilization of the subnational actors. George (2004) accuses MLG i.a. of too shallow a treatment of those actors in the EU system. Europeanization (especially the bottom-up one) focuses on the local and regional units and their participation in the EU polity, and in doing so it seems to escape such critics.

4.2. Resurgence of subnational units in the light of Europeanization

Introduction of the MLG concept to the research on European integration was brought about by a strong development of the regional policy in the European Community at the end of the 1980's (especially the reorganization of the Structural Funds in 1988 during the J. Delors' presidency). The introduced principals of partnership and subsidiarity have strengthened the position of subnational entities in the EU structures by guaranteeing them an access to the EU regional policy-making (see: Bache, Flinders, 2004: 3). The first stage of the resurgence of those entities (see Brenner, 2004: 6) was a turn towards regions, which gained political power on the EU scene. As a result, both MLG and Europeanization extended their interests from the state level to the regions, cities and localities. Börzel (2001) states, that Europeanization and regionalization have become two most important approaches in the postwar political research in Western Europe. However, only in the 1980's they ceased to be considered separately. The buzzword "Europe

of the Regions” (fostered i.a. by the German federal states, which wanted to develop channels of political influence in the European context, see: Börzel 2001) implied that those territories were crucial actors in the EU political and economic scene. Nonetheless, the enthusiasm for this idea faded quite quickly. As early as in the beginning of the XXI century, the thesis on the strength of the regions posing a threat to the states position, has become widely contested (Halkier, Sagan, 2005). However, the link between two processes: Europeanization and regionalization remained unquestioned (Börzel, 2001: 137). The mutual influence of subnational units and the EU policies has become a part of the Europeanization studies. Moreover, the interest – initially focused on regions – has extended on other entities, especially the cities, which from the 1980’s also have increasingly been taking part in the EU politics and integration (Hamedinger et al., 2008: 2669; comp. Le Gales, 2002; Atkinson, Rosignolo 2008; Heinelt, Niederhafner, 2008; Hamedinger, Wolffhardt, 2010). The EU developed a lot of instruments not only supporting cities’ development, but also enabling their participation in the EU matters. Hamedinger et al. (2008) analyzed the top-down influence of the EU policies on urban governance. Referring to the thesis on the creation of the new modes of governance in the EU, the authors compared governance changes in two cities implementing URBAN projects: Dortmund (Germany) and Graz (Austria). It turned out that the adjustment to the EU provisions was much shallower and task-oriented in the German city (we may call it accommodation) than it was in Graz. Austrian city revealed far reaching changes in the governance style – the horizontal networks were introduced as a sign of the incorporation of the EU participation principal (we may identify transformation there). Interpreting the observed differences, Hamedinger et al. (ibidem: 2683) rely on path-dependency concept. They underline the various administrative conditions and political cultures in both cities. Moreover, the initial style of governance occurred crucial: bigger mismatch in Graz corresponded to the higher adaptational pressure. In Dortmund, realization of the EU programme proceeded with the usage of the already existing modes of intersectoral cooperation, as they stayed in accordance with the EU preferences. In the theoretical perspective, Hamedinger et al. (2008) conclude, that the top-down or bottom-up understanding of Europeanization provides only a very simplistic frames for analysis of the complex process of multilateral adjustment of the European and national systems.

Heinelt and Niederhafner (2010) on the other hand choose the bottom-up Europeanization as a point for departure. They analyzed the possibilities of influencing the EU policy-making by the cities. Investigating Eurocities and Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the authors found a lot of specific features differentiating both institutions. Yet the conclusions on the strength of the urban influence were similar regardless the forum thorough which it was exerted. In both cases the real influence of the cities on the EU level was very limited, which corresponds both to the mentioned critics of

the scarce empirical evidence on Europeanization and to the skepticism on the strength of subnational units in the contemporary world.

Summing up, research on Europeanization develops in an eclectic way, undertaking new paths and empirical fields. The scope of interest and the variety of approaches increase, reflecting the complex, multi-actor and multilateral character of the changes in the EU palimpsest.

4.3. Institutionalization of Europeanization

Bache (2008) draws attention to the influence of neoinstitutionalism (Lowndes, 2009) on Europeanization. One of the most useful concepts is the distinction between the logic of consequentiality and of appropriateness (Börzel, Risse, 2003). The first one stresses the rational actions aimed at achievement of certain goals, whereas the second one discusses more complex processes of social learning, through which the aims and preferences can be modified. The distinction helps understand different attitudes towards MLG and Europeanization. Considering multi-level system from a rationalist perspective, one assumes that the shifts of power between the levels mean loses of power by one level at a cost of another. As power is treated as a zero-sum resource, governance becomes a struggle over its maintenance against other players. In contrary, the sociological approach claims that shifts of power between the levels lead to its multiplication and reconfiguration, so that there is no danger of losing it at others cost. European integration should not be seen as a mathematic equation of power per actor (see: Börzel, 2001: 139). In the process of bottom-up Europeanization through social learning (including dialogue, exchange of experience and cooperation) not only power can be turned into a positive-sum resource, but also preferences, aims and attitudes can be deeply transformed.

As a result, in the sociological perspective learning processes gain on importance. Radaelli (2003) distinguishes two types of learning, which correspond to the two described accounts: thin and thick one. Thin learning, connected to the rational logic means that the actors within the MS adjust their strategies and behavior to the EU requirements only to a minimal extend, so that their aims and preferences remain unchanged (Lodge, 2006 pointed out, that this type of Europeanization occurs very frequently). Thick learning can be linked to the sociological perspective, as it implies deep transformation of the national actors practices, preferences and goals under the influence of the EU.

The two classic schools explaining European integration also refer to this distinction. For intergouvernementalists (e.g. Moravscik, 1994 after: Börzel 2001) the position of states was unendangered. Moreover, they believed that in the process of integration states were gaining on strength when compared to regions. This was due to the fact that the representatives of the MS sit in various EU organs, whereas the regions remain on the margin of those

Table 4. Rationalist and sociological assumptions

Assumption	Rationalist accounts	Sociological account
Power	Zero-sum	Positive-sum
Interests	Stable	Flexible
Mechanisms of Europeanization	Redistribution of power resources	Socialization/learning

Source: Bache (2008: 13).

legal-institutional channels of influence. Regions did endeavour to fight for their position, not only directly on the EU forum, but also lobbying at the national level (see e.g. strategy of the German federal states described by Börzel 2001). The supporters of the buzzword “Europe of the Regions” used this argumentation in a reverse way, claiming that European integration has given the regions the possibility to bypass the national level and influence the international policy-making, what would not be possible otherwise. In this perspective the principals of partnership and subsidiarity gain a special meaning, as they may contribute to the further emancipation of the regions and localities (see: Brenner 2004).

5. EMPIRICAL CHALLENGES TO EUROPEANIZATION IN POLISH CONTEXT

Lodge (2006) claims that there is an excess of theoretical points on Europeanization, which are not followed by the empirical research. He stresses that diminishing this gap would occur beneficial for the theory – it would help set the new directions for conceptual studies or pick up those which are frequent in reality.

Another important argument in the call for empirical research on Europeanization is that most of its students concentrate on the top-down perspective (especially on its institutional aspects), leaving bottom-up and complex approaches understudied.

The main fields of empirical research on Europeanization are the interactions of the EU polity, politics and policies with (based on: Quaglia et al. 2007):

- state institutions
- domestic policies of the MS
- parties, party system and political representation in the MS
- territorial entities (especially regional and cities)

A few years before the biggest EU extension ever (2004) the attention of the Europeanization students was drawn to the new MS (Baun, 2002; Ferry, McMaster, 2005; Baun, Marek, 2006), which were expected to pose a new, fascinating field for empirical research. From the Polish perspective, the rich

tradition of Europeanization offers an inspiring and promising conceptual frames for the studies on the influence that the EU membership exerts on the domestic structures and practices. It seems especially important as Polish studies tend to focus on the absorption rates and other measurements of the administrative effectiveness by the implementation of the EU Funds (Grosse, 2004; Klimczak et al., 2006). Europeanization concept offers quite a different, complementary perspective.

Let the following brief indication of the possible fields for empirical research on Europeanization in Poland be an invitation for further studies on this phenomenon.

1. State institutions of a central level

Europeanization processes in Poland can be identified both in the reorganization of the central institutions (e.g. the establishment of the Ministry of Regional Development in 2005) and in the administrative reform of 1998 (creation of the 16 regions – *województwa*). In the literature about the new MS, the creation of the NUTS 2 is an often raised subject, as those units are the basic fields of reference in the implementation of the EU regional policy. The decision to establish in Poland 16 regions, big enough to act simultaneously as NUT 2 units, has turned crucial for their political position (see point 4; comp. Swianiewicz et al. 2008). Increased decentralization and the resulting empowerment of Polish regions is quite exceptional if compared for instance with the Czech situation. The NUTS 2 structures were imposed on the existing Czech self-governmental regions (*kraje*). *Cohesion regions* created in this way brings together two or three regions⁶, which poses a very specific politico-institutional frames for their Europeanization.

It is worth mentioning that also in this context the adaptation to the EU provisions is not a simple top-down process. With the access to the EU, domestic institutions – both newly created and already existing – have become card-carrying players in the EU multi-level system, able to co-shape its form and governance. This is definitely an interesting field for political geography.

2. Domestic policies

The linkage between top-down and bottom-up Europeanization seems the most obvious in case of national politics and policies. On the one hand we can observe the process of building the Poland's position in the EU, on the other the influence of the EU regulation on the domestic policies. The first perspective opens the door for the considerations on the shaping of the international relations within the EU institutions, the second one provokes the analysis of the particular policies and their link to the EU ones. Choosing the perspective closer to the political geography, the second approach will be commented on briefly.

As was already mentioned, Lodge (2006: 72) is quite skeptical about the deep restructuring of the national policies under the EU influence, yet he

⁶ with an exception of Prague region, which was big enough to become a separate NUTS 2 unit.

admits that the EU policies could be easily adopted by a MS, if it had not developed such a policy before. The author gives the examples of environmental protection and competition policy, but the studies of Swianiewicz et al. (2008) and Leonardi (2005) confirm that this is also true for the regional policy. Its budget, strongly increasing from the 1980s, together with its institutional development (realized in the subsequent reforms of 1988, 1992, 2000, 2006) have overshadowed the national regional policy in many countries. In theory, the cohesion policy “represents an addition to existing national regional policies rather than a substitute for national policies” (Leonardi, 2005: 18), yet in practice, it has turned the national policy into a more complementary tool for the EU Funds (*ibidem*). Leonardi discussed this phenomenon with regard to Italy, but he stresses that it has happened also in other MS. Looking at the main activities of the Ministry of Regional Development we may find Leonardi’s argument relevant also for the Polish case.

At first sight the described phenomenon seems to present a proof for top-down Europeanization, but it requires in-depth research into the degree of the domestic change and actors’ learning.

3. Party system and electoral behaviour

Polish parties at the beginning of the XXI century have been faced with the necessity to declare their attitude towards the EU. Like in most of the MS, the extreme cases, such as the inception of a new party, which would aim at support or contestation of the EU and would occupy a stable position in the national party system, have not appeared (Polish branch of Libertas and some other minor political movements gained minimal attention and even smaller support). Nonetheless developing the attitude towards the EU by the existing parties poses an interesting and probably the closest to the political science field of research within the Europeanization concept.

4. Regions and cities

Most geographical, for a change, thread of the Europeanization studies refers to the subnational administrative units. This line of argumentation is frequently analyzed on the example of the regional policy, as the one which provides for the most direct interactions between the regional and EU structures.

With regard to the implementation of the regional operational programmes, top-down Europeanization comes as a most prompt association: regional institutions have to adjust to the EU provisions to be accepted for the funding. Moreover, the modifications in the regional governance style can be observed. Investigating into the implementation of the Integrated Regional Operational Programme realized between 2004 and 2006, Swianiewicz et al. (2008 and 2010) point out various ways, in which the partnership principal was implemented in different Polish regions. Although the role of the private sector and the civil society is very limited in all the regions, the in-depth studies allowed for identification of the differences in the activity, strategies and features of the non-public actors involved in the IROP implementation. It remains a question, to what extent the participation of these actors,

introduced as a consequence of a formal EU requirement, trickles down to the consciousness of the regional actors. Is it becoming an usual governance element also in other policy fields or does it stay as a shallow adjustment of an extraneous rule? These are one of many questions which can be asked in this respect.

When analyzing the changes in the competence of the regional authorities in the both budget perspectives (2004-06 and 2007-13), the bilateral aspect of Europeanization becomes clear. The IROP of 2004-06 was decided upon with hardly any involvement of the regional self-governments, but in the present perspective (2007-13) 16 separate Regional Operational Programmes have been launched, increasing the role of the regional authorities. They had a right to decide on the specific records of a ROP (actually they formulated it, being limited only by the Community Strategic Guidelines), they also took part in negotiating it with the European Commission. The involvement of the regions in the EU politics (e.g. through participation in the Committee of Regions) is yet another aspect of their Europeanization.

Similar processes of gaining on importance within the EU palimpsest are to be observed with regard to the cities, which also use various institutions to gain access to the EU policy-making (e.g. through Eurocities and other urban networks; on emancipation of European cities see e.g. Le Gales 2002, Brenner 2004, Atkinson, Rossignolo 2008). Participation in the EU programmes (like URBAN or Jessica) and initiatives (like the European Capital of Culture), realization of projects within the Structural Funds and hosting the international events exert an influence on urban mode of governance and on local structures (see: Hamedinger et al. 2008).

Still, due to the fact that Polish regions are NUTS 2 units, they seem to be more straight forward units for studies on Europeanization.

CONCLUSION

Despite the mentioned critical points, the concept of Europeanization seems to offer quite stimulating frames for studies of Polish reality, which from the 2004 has been constantly facing the EU one. Application of the (quite new, though very broad and multi-path) Europeanization works opens the door for various research topics, for instance: analysis of different actors of the EU multi-level system, their relations, mechanisms of influence and of building ones position on the EU scene. Considering that most of the Polish studies on the domestic impact of the EU membership focus on the administrative efficiency in absorption of the EU Funds, this wide perspective would be highly enriching for the debate. Moreover, one may assume that Europeanization processes in a postsocialist state are quite specific, and as such may pay an interesting contribution to the academic debate originated and conducted mainly in Western Europe. For example, one may expect different repercussions of EU influence on local governance (see: the new

modes of governance in the EU: Kohler-Koch 1999, Tömmel 2008), due to the fact that in Poland all three sectors (public sector – self-government, civil society and private sector) have existed and cooperated only for circa 20 years now. Also the short EU membership exerts an influence on the channels, directions and modes of Europeanization. Swianiewicz et al. (2010) formulate the thesis, that the learning processes among regional actors in Poland occur quite slowly and shallowly. This thin learning seems to correspond to the shallow domestic change, suggested by Lodge (2006) as the most popular one.

Definitely, the dynamics and complexity of the processes of mutual interplay between the Polish and the EU level call for further research.

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